

# **EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT COMMITTEE**

Tuesday 3 April 2001  
(*Afternoon*)

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## EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT COMMITTEE

11<sup>th</sup> Meeting 2001, Session 1

### CONVENER

\*Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab)

### DEPUTY CONVENER

\*Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab)

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

\*Ian Jenkins (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)

\*Mr Frank McAveety (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)

\*Irene McGugan (North-East Scotland) (SNP)

\*Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

Michael Russell (South of Scotland) (SNP)

\*attended

### CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Martin Verity

### ASSISTANT CLERK

Ian Cowan

### LOCATION

Committee Room 2



## Scottish Parliament

### Education, Culture and Sport Committee

*Tuesday 3 April 2001*

*(Afternoon)*

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 14:31*]

**The Convener (Karen Gillon):** I call the meeting to order. Can I have the committee's agreement to take items 5, 6 and 7 in private?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

### Budget 2002-03

**The Convener:** As members know, the committee is responsible for monitoring the budgets of the various departments that our remit covers. Previously, we appointed a reporter who met the relevant officials and reported back to the committee. We then expanded our report from that.

Because of the committee's present agenda, it would be helpful if we could appoint a reporter to get the detailed information that we need, over the next few weeks, and return to the committee with a report. I suggest that Cathy Peattie, the deputy convener, should take on that role. The reporter's role is simply to go to the Executive, get the information and bring it back. The committee can then discuss the budgets and how they are being used. Unless there are any comments, can we agree to appoint Cathy Peattie as the reporter?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

## Children's Commissioner

**The Convener:** Agenda item 3 is an update on the children's commissioner inquiry. This morning, along with my colleague Frank McAveety, I heard the views of young people in Glasgow on the idea of a children's commissioner. Their views will feed into the information-gathering process. The *Evening Times* has been running a campaign and a children's jury, and some children came along to give us information on that. We will feed that information into the written evidence on the commissioner.

I have asked permission of the conveners group to go to Wales next Tuesday, to meet the chair of the Health and Social Services Committee and the Health and Social Services Secretary, to discuss the progress that the National Assembly for Wales has made on a children's commissioner. We are still trying to fix a date to visit the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Written evidence has been coming in steadily over the past few weeks, and we will now begin to work on that. Members also have a paper on a proposed day event and a film that we are considering making. We suggested making a film because we would be able to take it to a wider geographical area and reach some of the young people whom we have not managed to contact. We would approach organisations such as Who Cares? Scotland, whose remit covers such things, to help us do that. Do members have any comments on the proposals?

**Ian Jenkins (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD):** I like the idea of making a film, but I wonder whether we have enough time to do it. It would be up to the guys who produced the film and the organisations that they contacted to ensure that it would be ready in time. I am worried about the time scale, with the Easter holidays approaching, but if the film could be produced in time, it would be a good idea.

**Irene McGugan (North-East Scotland) (SNP):** I endorse that comment. It is an imaginative proposal that would allow more young people to express an opinion and get involved in the event than we could comfortably accommodate if we brought them here. The paper is correct in saying that young people are comfortable with videos and would not find it difficult to express themselves in that format and get involved in the event. The idea is to be commended.

**The Convener:** Can we proceed with the proposal and commission that work?

**Irene McGugan:** Committee members will be aware that we have also commissioned research into consultation with young people and that we

are now at the stage of bringing that to a conclusion and writing a final report. Some of us think that the children's commissioner inquiry and the outcome of the report are compatible in some ways, or could be linked. If we go ahead with this event on 4 June, perhaps it would be appropriate to publicly launch the completed report on consultation with young people at the same time. To achieve that, the timetabling would have to allow us to get the final report to committee members by 23 April.

The researchers are available to attend the committee on 15 May to speak to the report, present their research and participate in a general discussion around it. The report could then be signed off and authorised by the committee in time for 4 June, and a small part of our children's commissioner day event could be given over to its launch. Representatives of the many agencies, individuals and children who have an interest in the event will also have an interest in the paper, and the two might feed off each other's publicity.

**The Convener:** That would certainly be possible. However, representatives of the Scottish Qualifications Authority will provide a progress report to the committee on 15 May and we may run out of time. If we wanted to invite the Scottish Parliament information centre researchers, we would have to bring the meeting forward by half an hour to give them time to take us through what has been happening. If members do not have a problem with that, that would seem to be the obvious solution. Is that agreed?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

**The Convener:** Cathy Peattie has now arrived. The committee has agreed that you will be its reporter on the budget process, Cathy.

**Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab):** Fine.

## Europe Familiarisation Scheme

**The Convener:** Agenda item 4 is the deputy convener's report of her visit to the European Parliament. A written paper has just been circulated. I invite Cathy Peattie to introduce her report.

**Cathy Peattie:** I have prepared only a brief report but I have some background papers that members might be interested in.

The aim of the visit was to familiarise ourselves with the European Union and get up to speed with some of the relevant issues. We had an opportunity to speak to people who were doing some of the same work as this committee in areas such as education, culture, sport and the media. I found that particularly interesting.

My meeting with David Coyne, the head of the European Commission's directorate-general for education and culture was interesting as we talked about how indicators are being used in Europe. Members will recall that the committee has had that discussion frequently. He highlighted, as did Mr Hingel at a later meeting, that none of the European countries have been reluctant to identify the fact that a number of kids are leaving school as under-achievers. For the first time, people are realising that they have to do something about that—I suppose that it used to be seen as simply the fault of the young people as opposed to the system. I have brought back a report on indicators, which deals specifically with how quality indicators can be used. That might be useful for us to consider at a later date.

I had a similar discussion with Mr Hingel, also from the directorate-general for education and culture. We talked about ways in which people had been dealing with the issues surrounding indicators. He outlined a pilot project involving second-chance schools. It works in partnership with education and industry to bring together kids who have left school fairly early, who are not getting jobs and who have been, in a way, disenfranchised within the system. Its aim is to get those kids back into society and into employment. The pilot project has been fairly successful and I have an outline of a second-chance school that is being run in Leeds. It is an issue that we might want to deal with.

We will all be aware that, somewhere along the line, youth has slipped off the agenda of the Scottish Parliament. I am not sure if getting it back on the agenda is the role of our committee or that of the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee, but it is important that we address how the Parliament deals with teenagers and young people. We might want to flag that up. I have a

number of names of relevant people with whom we might want to speak.

I met Barbara O'Toole, who is a member of the European Parliament's Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport. She was interested in the work that we are doing on cultural issues and we exchanged information about our committees. She thought that it would be useful for us to link in with her committee on cultural areas. She suggested that she might visit us to examine a form of exchange between our committees to better promote some cultural issues.

I spoke to Doris Peck on languages. She did not seem to be quite up to speed on some of the issues around minority languages, although that is what I was interested in—I can tell that that does not surprise Irene McGugan. I have asked for other information to be sent to me. That was the only meeting of my visit that was in any way disappointing—it took place only an hour before I left so there was not much that could be done.

In spite of the press coverage, I found the visit useful and helpful. We can make links with Europe on the issues around education, culture, languages and so on and we must examine whether that should be done by exchanges, visits or whatever. We should certainly exchange information and I have the addresses of various websites that we should look at if we have not been looking at them already. Links with Europe provide a great opportunity for the committee.

The written report that members have received is brief. If there are any typographical errors, that is simply because it is hot off the press.

I will pass the publications that I brought back to Martin Verity, who can circulate them.

**The Convener:** It would be helpful if we invited Barbara O'Toole and some of the members of her committee to meet us. It might be easiest to factor in such a meeting if we did that informally, as we envisage meeting the Irish members.

We should examine whether it is possible to arrange for some members of our committee to visit the school in Leeds that Cathy Peattie mentioned. It seems to be a good example of something that could be done to help under-achieving young people.

Perhaps we could get the "European Report on the Quality of School Education" copied to all committee members. It would be helpful if members would read that.

**Cathy Peattie:** It is an interesting document. The European working committee on quality indicators did a lot of soul searching on the issue and its work has a good deal in common with some of that we have done and the issues that we have raised with Her Majesty's inspectors of schools.

**The Convener:** We will move into private session.

14:45

*Meeting continued in private until 15:08.*





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